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ABSTRACT

This module is part of a training program for foster parents and foster care workers offered at Colorado State University. The module explores the nature of family dynamics. The module's learning objectives address: (1) family functions, structure, membership, and responsibilities; (2) the stages of family development; (3) the impact of family structures, behaviors, and communication patterns on foster families; and (4) the effect of a foster child on the dynamics of a family. The module consists of six lectures which include reading materials, charts, and activities for individuals or groups. The first three lectures consider the function of, stages in the development of, and roles within the family. A role-playing exercise related to family rules, roles, functions, and communication patterns is included. The fourth lecture examines family rules. The foster child's entrance into and departure from a foster family are discussed in the fifth and sixth lectures. A form for evaluating the module is appended. (BC)

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FOSTERING FAMILIES

The Game Board of Family Dynamics

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Designed in Consultation with the Colorado Department of Social Services Under Grant Number C950405

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FOSTERING FAMILIES

A Specialized Training Program
Designed for
Foster Care Workers & Foster Care Parents

THE GAME BOARD OF FAMILY DYNAMICS: STRUCTURES, STAGES, RULES, ROLES, AND FUNCTIONS

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Designed in consultation with
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FOSTERING FAMILIES

is designed to improve the competencies of caseworkers and foster care parents in the areas of foster care placement, case management and supervision, case planning, and provide an understanding of the multiple-systems interfacing with families and out-of-home children.

is a unique opportunity for foster care parents and foster care workers to explore the many complex aspects of the foster care delivery system.

is a training program designed to be comprehensive in its approach to educating those people most important to the success of foster care.

is specially designed in 3 1/2 and 4 hour sessions to meet the varying learning and educational needs of foster care providers.

is designed to foster "a partnership of skill" to effect quality care for families and children in distress.

is offered for upper-division college classwork in the Social Work Department and Division of Continuing Education at Colorado State University.

is a collaborative project with the Colorado Department of Social Services and supported with funds from Title IV-E and Colorado State University.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

INTRODUCTION

Fostering Families is a specialized foster care training program. Various important learning concepts related to families, youth and children are explored *within* the context of child welfare and protective services. By paying specific attention to the foster care environment, Fostering Families' training is highly relevant for caseworkers and foster parents. Fostering Families is also unique because faculty and training staff receive regular input from foster parents and social services people who work daily to meet the needs of children in out-of-home placement. Thus, this training project continues to evolve because of the on-going training program.

Our goal is to create small group training experiences which offer new knowledge, concepts, ideas, and skills to improve (1) the foster care assessment and placement process, (2) the case planning, monitoring and supervising process, and, (3) the recruitment and retention of foster homes.

Foster parents and caseworkers are learning collaboratively in each session. Each module is designed to motivate participants to go beyond simple transmission of information to training opportunities created so that trainees can apply concepts either in role play situations, small group experiences, or through individual activities. Participants are also provided the opportunity in the training session to integrate their learning through discussion and group experiences. To achieve high accessibility for foster parents, training sessions are often held in the evenings and on weekends. To afford access to caseworkers, sessions are also scheduled on weekdays. Each week, training sessions are held throughout the urban, suburban and rural areas of the State.

This module, The Game Board of Family Dynamics, provides a special opportunity to explore the complex nature of how families operate. In this session, the trainers will facilitate a family role play that shows how families are impacted by differing role and function changes in its members. The family role play will also explore how family communication patterns influence them. These exercises will assist with the foster care assessment and placement process, and also enhance ongoing case monitoring and supervision.

Visual diagrams of families are used that will provide an overview of family stages and some tools which can be used to assess family structure and functioning. These will enhance the permanency planning process.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

INTRODUCTION

Each manual is written to provide a wide range of information on the topic area being addressed. In the training session it is unlikely that everything in the manual will be equally addressed. We recommend reading the manual completely soon after a training session. We have been told that this helps greatly in gaining a full understanding of the issue at hand.

Colorado State University allows participants the opportunity to gain university credit when a series of training sessions are satisfactorily completed. During the session, the training instructor will review procedures for applying for credit.

We welcome you to this Fostering Families training session. We encourage you to participate fully in the training; ask questions that help you (and others) in this interesting and challenging learning opportunity.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

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FOSTERING FAMILIES

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

BLENDED FAMILY (Serial or Step)	**A family that is formed from separate families that are united by marriage or other circumstance: a step family whose members are joined as a result of a second or subsequent marriage.**
FAMILY	**A primary social grouping whose members are related by blood, adoption, marriage, or common residence where the members have mutual and reciprocal processes that seek to enhance the functioning and socialization of all members. Family has primary responsibility for the socialization of their children.**
FAMILY ROLES	**A culturally and systematically determined pattern of behavior that prescribes the social norms, statuses, and expectations of a family member. Family roles are generally identified in terms of their function as a member.**
FAMILY RULES	**Usually an unwritten series of directives that influence how a family operates to maintain consistent and familiar patterns of behavior.**
FAMILY TREATMENT/ FAMILY THERAPY	**The professional process of working with a group of family members (preferably the entire family) where the family therapist focuses attention on the system of individuals as a whole or its parts. The family therapist works with the interpersonal patterns, the communication patterns including family roles, rules, and the environmental pressures affecting optimal family functioning.**
LONG-TERM FOSTER CARE	**As a response to the need for permanency for children in foster care, long-term foster care is a legal arrangement with a foster family where the foster home is seen as a placement to continue over a long period of time.**

FOSTERING FAMILIES

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

RELATIVE FAMILIES — **A phrase used in foster care to describe families who act as foster families, licensed or not. These adults, usually grandparents, aunts and uncles are natural extended families which are part of the child's natural (biological or otherwise) system.**

SYSTEM — **An abstract idea that is applied to describe the "elements" of a whole. Social systems include families, social groups, and communities. Systems are identified in order to understand and gain meaning about how "the parts" of a whole function whether toward organization or disorganization.**

FOSTERING FAMILIES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Caseworkers and foster parents will define what families are and their varying functions, structures, membership, and responsibilities. An understanding of these concepts will assist in the foster care recruitment and placement process.

2. The major stages of family development and related parental tasks will be examined. This will be useful in the development of the case plan and in decision-making regarding permanency planning.

3. Case planning, supervision, and assessment will be enhanced because case workers and foster parents will explore the impacts of foster families due to variations in family structures, family behaviors, and family communication patterns.

4. Participants will be offered a beginning understanding of the unique family dynamics created by the entrance of a new foster child and the exit of that child at some later point.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

THE FAMILY AND ITS FUNCTION

Lecturette #1

For us to begin to discuss any family, we must consider some definition of a family. For a foster family -- the family willing to make room for a stranger in its home, a definition can set the stage for greater understanding of the complexities in just defining the family.

Family Definition

The American Home Economics Association redefined the family in 1979 as "two or more persons who share resources, share responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and have commitment to one another over time. The family is that place that one 'comes home to'. It is a network of sharing and commitments that most accurately describes the family unit regardless of blood, legal ties, adoption, or marriage."

Families are important to any society. Generally, we are able to care for and raise children with the most safety and security in families. Families provide an emotional support for all members. Families are responsible for educating their members both to the rules of the larger society and the customs of the family. The family offers customs from ethnic, racial, or religious backgrounds.

Families are Made of the Individuals and More...

The unique characteristics of a family go far beyond its basic membership, organization, and the primary responsibilities. Each family is a particular response to the individuals who bring it into being, the life tasks each member is addressing, and the impact of current social and cultural influences. While each family is distinctly unique, certain social similarities exist between

Individual Activity

Decide what your definition of family is.

all families. It is this interplay of uniqueness and similarity which focuses exploration of the particular characteristics of the foster family/foster child interactions.

Professional literature and library practices have developed a wide variety of terms and concepts to describe the patterns of families, their functions, roles, and interactions. In general, most of these terms refer to common situations either contributing or distracting from positive interactions. This module explores many of these ideas.

Family Systems

All families function as social systems. Understanding systems concepts is very important as an introduction to the elements in a family.

A system, any system, is defined simply as a whole made up of interrelated and interdependent parts. The parts exist in a state of balance, and, when change takes place within one part, there is compensatory change within the others. Systems become more complex and effective by constant exchange of both energy and information within their environment. When this exchange does not take place, systems become ineffectual. A system is made up not only of interrelated parts but is itself an interrelated part of a larger system.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

Lecturette #1 (Cont'd)

In every family, it is possible to see the elements that compose social systems. For example,

- A family has a purpose or goal, a reason for existing.

- A family system is made up of essential parts in common with other social systems. Each part is at one and at the same time part of a larger system and whole, complete in itself.

- In the family system, there is order to the working parts, a hierarchy and specialization unique to that family system.

- Families, acting as a group, have boundaries, as do each of the family members.

- All systems have power or energy, a means of maintaining movement. Food and the provision of other physical needs can be seen as power; so can family activities, rituals, and beliefs.

In thinking about systems and families, the concept of boundaries is very important. Where are the "edges" of a family system?

One way of exploring the boundaries or "edges" of a family system is to list some aspect of family functions. For example, you might list the membership of the immediate family and then the "closest" of the extended family. You may wish to add another list of persons who "feel" like family, even if not related and explore why this is so and the prerogatives they may share in this role.

<u>Group or Individual Activity</u>:

Provide some examples you believe make up appropriate "edges" for a family. How do foster families create "edges?"

FOSTERING FAMILIES

Lecturette #1 (Cont'd)

Another "edge" may refer to the decision-making process of the family, such as what decision may be made by an individual compared to what decisions require mutual discussion and agreement. Many of the boundaries that define a family's functioning can be quite fluid which promotes flexibility and openness to new and positive experiences. Simultaneously, many boundaries are elected to be extremely specific and concrete which, however, does not imply that concreteness is a negative aspect.

Families as systems are constantly evolving to meet the different tasks which it chooses to promote and are imposed upon it which demands a constant renegotiation of the elements that compose the family system.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

THE STAGES OF FAMILY

Lecturette #2

Like people, we now believe that families go through stages of development. Beginning with the event of "courting," when two adults date, family development moves through many patterns until reaching retirement. Chart #1 depicts for us the many stages: Courtship, Coupling, Early Family Parenting, Transition and Emancipation (for both the young adult child and the parent(s), and Retirement and possibly Grandparenting.

Family separation and divorce are presented in this chart not as endings, rather these events may be seen as specific internal changes that influence the major developmental stages that families experience.

Chart #2, "Stages of Family Development for Parents," shows major parental tasks occurring in each family stage as well as some consideration of the payoffs of mastering the development in that stage.

Within the foster care family, we might wonder what goes on in families when the foster family is in one stage, for example, the transition/emancipation stage in its own family, and then works with a small child who has been living in an entirely different family parenting stage.

Group or Individual Activity:

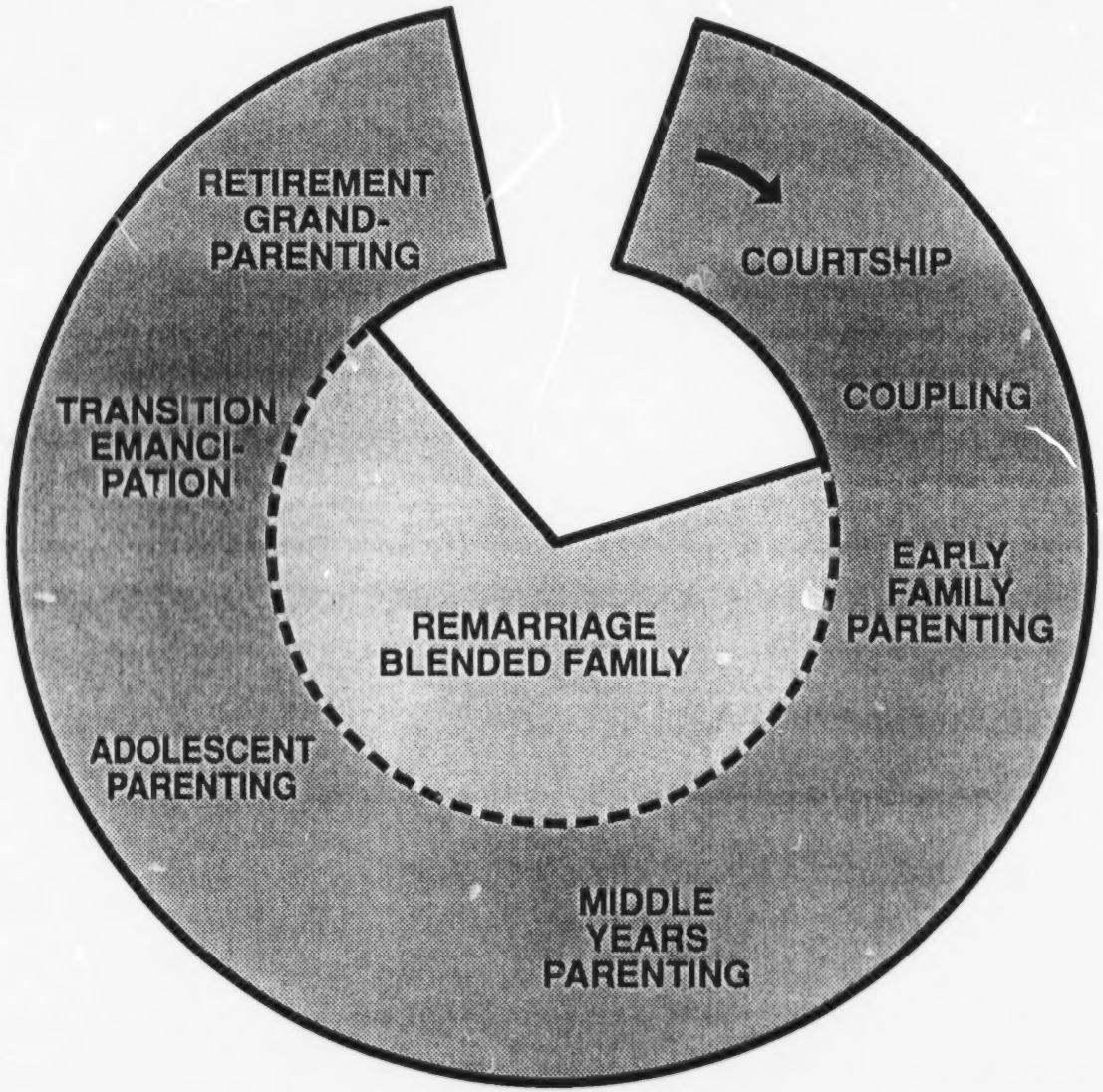
Examine Chart #1, "The Family Development Process."

Group or Individual Activity:

Examine Chart #2, "Stages of Family Development." Using a foster family you know, consider the stage of that family and then consider the family stage that a foster child may have emerged from. What might be important for us to understand when helping a child adjust in the foster home?

FOSTERING FAMILIES

FAMILY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS
From Courtship to Retirement and Family Change Patterns



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STAGES OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Chart #2

Stage	Parental Tasks	Potential Payoffs
Courtship	Exploration: similarities and differences Testing the foundation Establishing basic philosophy, rules, and rights	Experiencing new kind of belonging Pleasing and being pleased Excitement, romance, and play Sexual, intellectual, and companionship enjoyment
Coupling	Forming spouse bonding Forming mutual accommodations Settle basic tasks, support, and transactions Exploring new status Separating from old family Learning to fight Establishing social network	Experiences self as adult Experiencing beginning intimacy Instrumental accomplishment of new skill battery Solidifying self-worth
Beginning Parenting	Renegotiating boundaries Establishing executive system Developing nurturing and individuating skills Developing spousal support system Establishing in-law system	Reexperiencing the world Understanding giving Getting kicks through participating in growth of another Enjoying new relationship with families of origin
Adolescent Parenting	Maintaining communication Providing standards for individuation testing Providing graduates freedoms Clarifying own identity Surviving and keeping cool!	Increasing freedom Enjoyment of increasing humor Discovery and maturity in children Staying contemporary
Transitional	Accepting prolonged adolescence Relinquishment of control Providing "retread"	Rediscovering spouse Deriving new interests Children return to be friends
Grandpeople	Providing resource as needed to new in-laws Providing history and enrichment to grandkids Experiencing summative activities with spouse	Freedom and, hopefully, economic freedom Different sense and use of time Harvesting rewards in depth of relationships New relationship with spouse

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FAMILY ROLES
Lecturette #3

The roles and role performances by which families operate are frequently evolved in very subtle and complex patterns, and at time, not even recognized by the family members themselves. The role play in Exercise #1 helps to focus on how some of these roles and role performances evolve.

Family roles are usually identified in terms of their function in a family. Some roles have been identified as:

Box 1

Family Roles

1. Family caretaker--member who is called upon to nurture or care for other family members in need.

2. Family switchboard--transmits and monitors communication throughout the family (usually mother).

3. Family pioneer--exposes the family to new experiences, takes risks, moves to unknown territory (then brings family along).

4. Family distractor--helps family avoid or ignore painful or difficult matters by exhibiting noisy or demanding attention.

5. Family joker--deflects tension with humor or antics.

6. Family organizer or camp counselor--often organizes in order to combat family sadness or depression. Enthusiastic planner.

7. Family scapegoat--becomes the receptacle for spoken and unspoken negative feelings and qualities such as anger, incompetence of immoral sexuality. Functions to maintain family solidarity by masking or siphoning off conflicts which might otherwise balance the feelings and threaten the self-esteem of others in the system.

Group or Individual Activity:

What other family roles might be added to the list of family roles?
Individually, consider which roles, if any, you recognize about yourself and other family members.

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Lecturette #3 (Cont'd)

Within the last several years, many authors have discussed new types of roles that depict patterns in families, yet these roles are generally less functional for the process of quality family functioning. These roles are descriptive of behavioral patterns adopted by family members for survival. See Box 2 below.

Box 2

Family Roles in Dysfunctional Families

1. **Alcoholic/Addict - person carrying shame and pain.**
2. **Chief Enabler - person who adjusts for the addict; usually the spouse.**
3. **Hero - overachiever; responsible one.**
4. **Scapegoat - acts out family problems.**
5. **Lost Child - causes no trouble; silent, withdrawn child.**
6. **Mascot - family favorite; super cute, often hyperactive and accident prone.**
7. **Placator - family comforter; good listener; feels responsible to ease family pain.**
8. **Adjuster - learns daily to adjust to the family's needs, not their own.**

FOSTERING FAMILIES

Lecturette #3 (Cont'd)

Role Characteristics:

Certain principles from role theory are useful for understanding families. They include:

Role congruity - occurs when a person acts out their role in a way that "fits," feels comfortable, and generally serves to complement other roles.

Role conflict - when a person is having difficulty either fulfilling a role properly or is acting out a role that infringes on another person's role(s).

Role continuity - suggests that staying in a particular role is important. When people jump around in their roles.

Role flexibility - addresses the importance of being able to modify oneself in their role to meet other influences.

Role ambiguity - occurs most often as a person takes on dual, simultaneous roles, or, mixes roles. Outsiders are unclear about the person's intent and feel confused.

Role complementarity - addresses the "fit" between roles.

Role competency - suggests that one gains comfort with a role with practice. People are not competent in roles just because of the title.

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ACTIVITY FOR PARTIAL CREDIT

REMEMBERING YOUR ROLE

Instructions:

Look back on your own family of origin and think about the roles that fell to each member. Write a paragraph describing the central role you played in that past family.

Recall four of your usual ways of behaving that tell you this was your role. List them.

Recall two behaviors of another family member that worked to keep you in your role. List them.

In another paragraph describe an incident between you and your family that clearly illustrates your point. Be sure to include your age and as much of the circumstance surrounding the incident as you can remember.

NOTE: This material will be handled as confidential so be as open as you feel comfortable. If you do not wish to share personal information about your past, put a foster child you have known in your place and answer the questions in terms of what you know of their experience.

Please head your assignment: "Game Board Assignment."

When completed, mail to:

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FOSTERING FAMILIES

RULES, ROLES, FUNCTIONS, AND COMMUNICATION PATTERNS
Exercise #1

INSTRUCTIONS: This exercise will take approximately one hour if actually role played.[1] To create the role play, use at least one trainer and five or six group members to role play the family depicted on the cards and the situations presented to you. Each separate task listed below should be role played for approximately 10 minutes, or until the trainer indicates moving to a new task.

Those people not directly involved in the role play are asked to observe the process, particularly looking at how they understand what each person is doing.

Only after all parts of the role play have been completed will the group discuss their reactions to the role play experience including exploring the roles each played, the difficulties experienced, and the awarenesses that emerged from the role play process.

When role play members have been identified, we will begin.

THE FAMILY

Our family, the Waxman's, live in Colorado. This is a three-generational family -- paternal grandfather and grandmother, husband/father, wife/mother, and two birth children, Hope, aged 13 and Jeremy, 7.

As we meet the family, the grandparents are visiting for the weekend. They live relatively close to the family and stay over often. The children are close to and enjoy their grandparents immensely.

The Waxman's have been foster parents about one year. They have had two different foster children, yet do not have foster children in the beginning of this role play.

---

[1] **When fewer than five people are available, it is not easy to create a realistic role play. If this occures then the group or individuals may separately study this module to be able to explore the cards presented and imagine the characters presented.**

SOME GUIDELINES TO DISCUSS

To begin the process, remind role players to stay in their roles, not apologizing if they role play somewhat differently than they actually behave in "real" life. Second, encourage family members to move around and use their body language to bring congruent and more accurate portrayals of their feelings to the experience. Third, family members can move furniture or use other props as they wish. Let members know that they can talk to each other in their roles and get help if needed. Make it clear that there are no right or wrong answers to the role play! Thank the role players for helping the learning process.

ACTIVITY AREA ONE

Hand a Card 1, Side 1 "role" card to each member of the role play group. When possible, give men the male role cards and the women the female role cards. If there are only 5 role play participants instead of 6, delete the "grandmother" card.

Move the group into a circle. Instruct the role play members to read the Card 1, Side 1 card only. After each member has read their Side 1, Card 1 card, ask the group to introduce themselves.

Then, ask this constructed family to discuss the following:

Task 1: What are the basic family rules of this family? (Take approximately 10 minutes)

Then, have the family read Side 2 of this Card 1. Each now has a new family label. Again, have each member introduce their new role label to the group. What has happened is that a foster child and birth mother have been introduced and the grandparents have gone.

The facilitator gives some new information, as follows:

> **The Waxman family received a new foster child. His name is Jackson. He is 5 years old. He was placed in an emergency home two days ago and will arrive before dinner this evening. Jackson's father is out of the state on an oil rig; the mother severely neglected Jackson and the Department intervened. The mother has been provided a case plan that states she must participate in a detox program and parenting classes along with agreeing to varying testing situations.**

Offering approximately 10 minutes for this next activity, ask this family, which now has Jackson with them, to discuss their family rules. Have the birth parents observe this second task only.

Task 2: **Tell your new foster child what your family rules are. Indicate any different rules you will impose because this child is new in your home.** (10 minutes)

Now, involving the birth parents, discuss the following:

Task 3: **Jackson's mother will be visiting him at the foster home. After some discussion with the foster parents, she will take Jackson to a nearby mall for an hour or so. The family is in the living room when Annie arrives. The birth parent is coming to the foster home for her first home visit with her child. Talk to the parent about the rules her child must obey and what, if any, discipline he will be given, when needed.** (Approximately 10 minutes)

ACTIVITY AREA TWO

Now, hand each member of Card 2, "Behavioral Characteristics" card. Ask each member to take a minute to consider how they will role play this behavioral characteristic. Tell the birth parent that they are to observe at this point only, even though they have received a behavioral card for a later time. Ask observers to guess at what basic behavior each member might be role playing.

Task 4: **After each member has had an opportunity to consider their card, ask the foster family members to describe to each other how they each go about keeping their most valued toy or personal from being lost or taken by other family members.** (10 minutes)

ACTIVITY AREA THREE

At this point, hand each family member a "Communication Style" Card 3. Have each member maintain their previous behavioral characteristic and now add this communication style. Let group members know that they may feel that the two styles don't go together, but we also know that at times, people act a bit disjointed in life, so they should do their best.

Again, ask the birth parent to examine and consider the card they received, but not be involved in this role play at this time. Ask any observers to consider what "emotional make-up" or communication style they observe in their group.

Exercise #1 (Cont'd)

Task 5: After each member has had an opportunity to consider their card, tell the foster family that you just received a call from the caseworker. The worker believes that the foster child is not doing well in your foster home and she is considering a move for him. Have the family discuss the following.

What might be the reasons for the worker feeling Jackson might need to move to another foster home. How should the family respond to the caseworker when mother calls her in the morning? (10 minutes)

ACTIVITY AREA FOUR

This is the last activity area. Tell each family member that they are now being asked to add on a special family function. Indicate to the entire group that family functions are often somewhat rigid in families that are in distress and the following role play has been devised to illustrate some rigid family roles to illustrate the power of specific family roles.

Task 6: After each member has had a moment to consider their role, indicate that the foster child has been in this family for 7 months now. Present either of the following problems that the foster family must address with the birth parents present. Annie is again picking Jackson up for a visit.

Situation 1:

The 7-year old male foster child is very afraid of the 13-year old girl in this foster family. He reports that she has been mean to him. He complains that no one believes him. Ask Annie to talk with the family about this situation. (10 minutes)

or Situation 2:

Jackson has just gotten home from a Health Clinic visit. Tests show that he has a tumor on his thigh. The doctors have scheduled exploratory surgery for the weekend. Mark brings Jackson home from the doctor. (10 minutes)

ACTIVITY AREA FIVE

Before the family ends their role play, ask Jackson to arrange the family for a family snapshot that will be put in his "life book." Indicate to Jackson that for our purposes here, he is free to include who he wants, and he is to arrange the family however he wants -- who touches whom, the proximity of each person to another, who "earned the right" to be taller, shorter and the next in size, etc.

Then the facilitator takes the picture.

The facilitator then thanks everyone for their role playing and observing functions!

WRAP-UP DISCUSSION

We begin with the role players discussing their reactions first. This allows the people most intimately involved in the experience to sort out any concerns or present any questions to the trainer and the group.

Use the entire training group to discuss specific points in the role play. Where appropriate, the observers can serve to provide feedback to the role play members. Ask the observers for their reactions as well.

There are many questions that could focus a discussion of this role play. Some specific questions include:

1. **How do the communication styles we adopt affect out functioning in a family?**
2. **How do the behaviors we adopt affect how we are perceived in a family?**
3. **What are the benefits of some functions in the family and the detriments of others? Can we identify other family functions that could have been role played?**
4. **How is problem solving affected by the family members' functioning?**

Side 1 MOTHER Julie	Side 1 FATHER Mark
Side 1 FEMALE CHILD - 13 Hope	Side 1 MALE CHILD - 7 Jeremy
Side 1 GRANDFATHER Bruce	Side 1 GRANDMOTHER Pam

Side 2 FOSTER MOTHER Julie	Side 2 FOSTER FATHER Mark
Side 2 FEMALE CHILD - 13 Hope	Side 2 MALE FOSTER CHILD - 7 Jackson
Side 2 FOSTER CHILD'S BIRTH FATHER Tom	Side 2 FOSTER CHILD'S BIRTH MOTHER Annie

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CARD 2

Behavioral Characteristics **EASY GOING**	**Behavioral Characteristics** **ACTIVE**
Behavioral Characteristics **MESSY**	**Behavioral Characteristics** **HESITANT**
Behavioral Characteristics **ORGANIZED**	**Behavioral Characteristics** **NEAT**

Communication Style (emotional makeup) **CLOWN**	**Communication Style (emotional makeup)** **SLOW**
Communication Style (emotional makeup) **ANXIOUS**	**Communication Style (emotional makeup)** **COMPLAINER**
Communication Style (emotional makeup) **BLAMER**	**Communication Style (emotional makeup)** **PLACATER (smoothes things over)**

Functional Family Role **COORDINATOR** Enthusiastic Planner Camp Counselor	Functional Family Role **DISTRACTOR** Helps family avoid or ignore painful or difficult matters thru behavioral distractions, i.e., noise, clowning around
Functional Family Role **VICTIM** Feels helpless Person to whom injustices have been done	Functional Family Role **PIONEER** Exposes family to new experiences Takes risks
Functional Family Role **SCAPEGOAT** Person who displays spoken and unspoken family tensions and hostilities. Person functions to maintain family solidarity by being focus of problems	Functional Family Role **CARETAKER** Nurturer Switchboard Operator--transmits and monitors

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FAMILY RULES

Lecturette #4

Family structure and relationship patterns influence all members of a family. In order to better understand families, we will examine family rules that foster order in families and tools that help assess families in situations.

Rules

Every family has a set of rules, written or unwritten, spoken or unspoken. These rules have to do with who in the family is to play which roles, how the work in the family is to get done, who takes care of whom, how the family has fun with each other, and how contact is made with the wider environment.

Families operate in a reciprocal network of roles and tasks. When families are unable to function in this reciprocal fashion, we often see family breakdown. Family functioning can be understood by examining task performance and the influence each person's participation in family task performance. These three factors are important in measuring family effectiveness:

1. **Productivity--how does the family as a group balance between work and emotionality, marshall forces, and complete tasks?**

2. **Leadership patterns--some pattern of leadership seems needed for effective family functioning. Some members are willing to take on the leadership role and be successful. While others are willing to support that leadership.**

3. Expression of conflict--there is no such thing as a conflict-free relationship or family. What is to be noted here is whether there is too much or too little conflict being expressed. As a result the task is never completed by the group. In the end of either extreme situation, the outcome is the same.

Here are some examples of family rules:

**Take care of your own mess in order to respect other's space and things. **Help yourself by not depending on parents so much. **Help each other. **Particularly kids to kids. **Ask before you take other people's things. **There are limits, such as curfews for kids. **Parents should know and approve of their children's friends and acquaintances. **Kids should obey parents and grandparents. **Respect the elderly. **Don't be rowdy in the house. **No fighting. **People need privacy. **Right to choose my own friends. **Right to negotiate. **Respect each family member. **Allow each member to be an individual. **Respect decisions made. **Be honest. **A home is safe. **It's o.k. to make mistakes. **Take responsibility for consequences. **Parents need to respect each other. **Live within your means. **Right to grow and keep growing.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

THE FOSTER CHILD ENTERS A NEW FAMILY SYSTEM

Lecturette #5

The role play that began this module offered some insights into the process of the entering foster child into a foster family.

There are several key points. First, as in any family, when a person comes or goes, the entire family system must readjust. This adjustment can occur in family roles, responsibilities, communication patterns, or interpersonal relationships.

As discussed previously, while the foster family system adjusts to the addition of a new member, it is often the foster child who must make the most adjustments. The routines and rules of the foster family are familiar ground to that family's members, but totally unknown to the foster child. Recalling how you responded to suddenly being put in an unfamiliar situation gives some clue to the magnitude of issues the foster child must address. For a foster child, placement involves not only the substitution of different parent figure, but frequently also changes in schools, friendships, and neighborhoods. Each of these factors can be as anxiety provoking to the foster child as are his concerns about his natural family and his future. Frequently, the foster child manifests these anxieties in one realm of behavior seemingly unrelated to the real topic of his concern. Foster parents are, therefore, presented initially with two overlapping behavior sets the child might exhibit: 1) behaviors that might be specific to adjusting to a new and unfamiliar living environment, and 2) behaviors by the child that might be the primary reason for placement.

<u>Group or Individual Activity:</u>

Discuss some of the ways a new foster child might be introduced to the routines of the foster home. List some of the anxieties the child might experience.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

Lecturette #5 (Cont'd)

Recognizing and evaluating the quality of the adaptation process by the foster child to the placements constitutes the core issues that the foster parent, caseworker, and other treatment team members must address. For the foster parent, this role requires her to be both observer of the child's behavior patterns and implementor of recommended treatment techniques.

In addition to this process of adjustment, foster children often have added needs that make readjustment complex and challenging. For example, if a foster child has emotional problems, these emotional problems often present difficult behavior patterns. Responding to the expectations and needs of each family member becomes most important.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

THE FOSTER CHILD LEAVES THE FAMILY: READJUSTMENT AND GRIEF

Lecturette #6

Because foster care is generally seen as a temporary arrangement, while parent(s) regain their ability to parent, it is important to identify the ending point of foster care. Most foster care placements will terminate. A few may move to a status of "long-term foster care" or adoption, but the foster family must function as if the placement is temporary.

It is often said in the basic social helping process that all helping should be viewed as a beginning, middle, and end throughout the helping relationship. If the end is identified at the beginning, there is more self-determination (self-will) offered, the person in need.

The termination of a placement should receive the same emphasis as preplacement and during placement services, as it involves both structural and emotional changes for the foster family and child. The same elements relating to change, adaptation behavior, separation, etc. which were pertinent to recognize in the placement process are also relevant to the termination process. These factors need to be addressed whether termination has been anticipated and worked toward, or happens unexpectedly. In addition, it should be reemphasized that termination feelings and processes are equally evident and important to the foster family as to the foster child.

Grief is a natural process at the end of a placement experienced by both the foster family and the foster child. Termination always seems to reactivate the original feeling and motivations evident at the beginning of a placement and are measured against the activities occurring during the placement.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

KEY POINTS

1. Even though families are different in areas such as culture, class, or size, families generally respond to their needs in very adequate ways.

2. The roles that exist among family members are variable and family members may or may not sustain their role over time.

3. The structure of families is dynamic, meaning that families change their membership at various points. Secondly, family structure does not guarantee successful role functioning.

4. What has major impact on how successful a family can be is the equality of the commitment among its members.

5. Families, including fostering families, have rules spoken or unspoken, that operate all of the time. This is important to know in the placement and assessment process.

6. Families have goals, priorities, and expectations that define and direct how a family functions. This would need to be taken into consideration during the permanency planning process.

7. Children entering a fostering family create change in that family. Assessment and on-going case monitoring are critical because of this.

8. During the different phases of the fostering process, i.e., beginning, middle, and end, the family system must continually adjust.

9. There are many tools (eg. genograms) available to help understand and assess a family in a situation.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

To explore more about families and their functions:

Garbarino, James. Children and Families in the Social Environment. NY: Aldine Publishing Co., 1982. Individual chapters give specific understanding of the developing child in their environment.

Satir, Virginia. Conjoint Family Therapy. CA: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1983. The text discusses family theory, communication theory, and the practice of therapy. It includes information about a family life chronology.

For more information about family stages: courtship, couples, marriage, parenting, divorce, and retirement:

Le Masters, E.E. Parents in Modern America: A Sociological Analysis. IL: The Dorsey Press, 1970. A book about parents, not children. It discusses roles and social class, as minorities, as individuals, as singles and in the social change process.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

Colorado State University
Application for Partial Credit

Module No.: SW_ _ _ _._ _ _

Name: _____ Social Security #:_____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

_____
(city) (state) (zip)

Grading: Pass/Fail (unless otherwise requested)

The Social Work Department at Colorado State University will grant university credit for each six different modules of training completed. Applications for credit must be made at the Time of Each Module Training ONLY. All work carried out in the modules must meet general academic standards of Colorado State. Written materials must be submitted and receive satisfactory grading for credit to be awarded. These applications will be held until the applicant completes his/her sixth module training. At this point, s/he will be able to formally register through the Division of Continuing Education for 1 credit hour. One credit hour of these modules costs $90.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

THE GAME BOARD OF FAMILY DYNAMICS

EVALUATION BY PARTICIPANTS

The following items are designed to assess your satisfaction with the training as well as the effectiveness of the training design and materials. Please use the following scale and circle your response.

1 - not well addressed in the training
2 - not as adequately addressed as necessary
3 - adequate; given sufficient attention
4 - well addressed in the training
5 - very well addressed in the training

		Not Well Addressed				Very Well Addressed
1.	Caseworkers and foster parent will define what families are and their varying functions, structures, membership, and responsibilities. An understanding of these concepts will assist in the foster care recruitment and placement process	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The major stages of family development and related parental tasks will be examined. This will be useful in the development of the case plan and in decision-making regarding permanency planning	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Case planning, supervision, and assessment will be enhanced because case workers and foster parents will explore the impacts of foster families due to variations in family structures, family behaviors, and family communication patterns	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Participants will be offered a beginning understanding of the unique family dynamics created by the entrance of a new foster child and the exit of that child at some later point	1	2	3	4	5

B. The following items relate to program aspects of the training module. Please rate these items on the following scale. Any additional comments are welcome in the space provided after the question.

1 = Very Poor
2 = Poor
3 = Adequate
4 = Good
5 = Very Good

	Very Poor	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very Good
1. The length of the training (Was the material covered in the time allotted?)	1	2	3	4	5
2. Usefulness of training manual	1	2	3	4	5
3. Participant responsiveness	1	2	3	4	5
4. Your ability to participate expressing your ideas, feelings, and concerns	1	2	3	4	5
5. Your interest in the training session	1	2	3	4	5
6. Your comprehension of the material presented	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS: Please be specific:_____

C. We are interested in your feedback about our trainer, co-trainer(s). With this feedback we can continue to improve our sessions.

1 = Totally inadequate and ineffective
2 = Generally inadequate and ineffective
3 = About half and half
4 = Usually adequate and effective
5 = Highly adequate and effective

	Totally Ineffective/ Inadequate		0		Highly Effective/ Adequate
1. Knowledge/mastery of the subject matter	1	2	3	4	5
2. Preparation	1	2	3	4	5
3. Ability to communicate	1	2	3	4	5
4. Style of presentation	1	2	3	4	5
5. Enthusiasm/interest in subject matter	1	2	3	4	5
6. Overall performance	1	2	3	4	5
7. Ability to facilitate	1	2	3	4	5

8. In general, what would you identify as the strengths of trainer(s)?

9. In general, what would you identify as the deficiencies of trainer(s)?

D. The training setting is obviously an important aspect of a sessions success. We are interested in your feedback regarding the location, room, etc., and again welcome any comments or suggestions.

	Very Poor	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very Good
1. Setting appropriate for concentration, i.e., distraction, noise, temperature.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Setting conducive for participation	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS: Please be specific:

E. Overall Comment: What could have been done differently to make the training sessions more beneficial or helpful to you? (Please use back of page if necessary).

I.D. #_ _ _ _

FOSTER CARE DEMOGRAPHICS

E. DIRECTIONS: Please fill in all blanks with information where needed or circle the correct number where several choices are provided on the next two pages.

1. Last 4 #'s of Social Security # _ _ _ _

2. Circle correct role: 1. worker 2. foster parent 3. Other_____
(please specify)

3. Date _ _ - _ _ - _ _

4. County _____

5. Circle gender: 1. Male 2. Female

6. Circle racial background:
1. Hispanic
2. Black, not of Hispanic origin
3. Asian-American
4. American Indian
5. White, not of Hispanic origin
6. Other:_____

7. Age_____

8. Are you (please circle one): 1. Married 2. Separated 3. Single

9. Number of birth & adopted female children_____

10. Number of birth & adopted male children_____

11. Circle age group of birth & adopted children:

1. all under 5
2. all under 10
3. all under 15
4. all under 18
5. all over 18
6. some under 18 & others over 18
7. none

12. Highest level of formal education: (please circle one)

1. some high school
2. high school graduate
3. some college
4. college graduate
5. Master's degree or higher

13. Within the past year, have you participated in any other foster care training other than Colorado State's Fostering Families?
1. yes 2. no

Thank you for your help! Your feedback is important for our continuing improvement of the Fostering Families project.

PLEASE CONTINUE TO THE NEXT PAGE

F. DIRECTIONS: Finally! Complete only the section which refers to you as either a Foster Care Parent or Foster Care Worker.

FOSTER CARE PARENT SECTION

14. What type of agency are you employed or licensed through?

1. County Department of Social Services
2. Private Child Placing Agency (please specify)_____
3. Both County Department of Social Servoces and Private.
4. Indian/Tribal
5. Other (please specify) _____

15. Total # of children presently in home_____

16. Number of foster female children_____

17. Number of foster male children_____

18. Circle age group of foster children:

1. all under 5
2. all under 10
3. all under 15
4. all under 18
5. all over 18
6. some under 18 & some over 18
7. no children now
8. not yet foster parents
9. other_____

19. Is at least one parent in the home providing parenting and supervision?

1. Yes 2. No, Parent(s) have work responsibilities outside of the home.

20. Length of involvement as foster family: _____years

21. Number of foster children for which licensed_____

22. Total number of foster children since being a foster parent_____

23. Circle general age groups of foster children you have served:

1. 0 - 24 mos.
2. 1 - 6 years
3. 0 - 12 years
4. 0 - 18 years
5. 0 - 21 years
6. short term/emergency

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FOSTER CARE WORKER SECTION

24. What type of agency are you employed or licensed through?

1. County Department of Social Services
2. Private Child Placing Agency (please specify) _____
3. Indian/Tribal
4. Other _____ (please specify)

25. Are you currently employed as a foster care worker? 1. Yes 2. No

26. Length of time in current agency _____years

27. Current title:

1. Caseworker I
2. Caseworker II
3. Caseworker III
4. Supervisor I
5. Supervisor II
6. Foster Case Trainer
7. Other (specify) _____

28. Length of time in current position _____years

29. Length of time in protective services/foster care unit _____years